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ABSTRACT

Interviews on the quality of day care in the United States are presented in this transcript of a program broadcast in the National Public Radio weekly series, "Options in Education." Writers, day care center personnel and others describe and evaluate the current situation. Federal legislation concerning children is examined, and researchers discuss effects of day care programs on children. Jane Gold, author of "Checking Out Childcare", describes the child care business, its dimensions and licensing practices. Peggy Pizzo, author of "Infant Child Care Debate", discusses parents' guilt feelings in relation to outside child care. Advantages and disadvantages of public school sponsorship of day care are considered. Despite support for day care centers and child care in the public schools, the fastest and most widely used form of child care appears to be home care. Psychologist Jerome Kagan has found home care, inside or outside the child's home, to be preferred over day care centers by most parents. He considers staff-child ratio the most important factor in day care quality, recommending ratios of 3 to 1 for children under 18 months and 6 to 1 for children 18 months to three years. A family home care teacher-trainer is interviewed on the advantages of the family-home environment. The director of a large day care center tells of long waiting lists and the social costs involved. The Federal role in preschool education, including prospects for comprehensive Federal child care legislation, are discussed by Congressman John Brademas and representatives of various child care interest groups. The staffing-ratio controversy is discussed. (Author/BF)

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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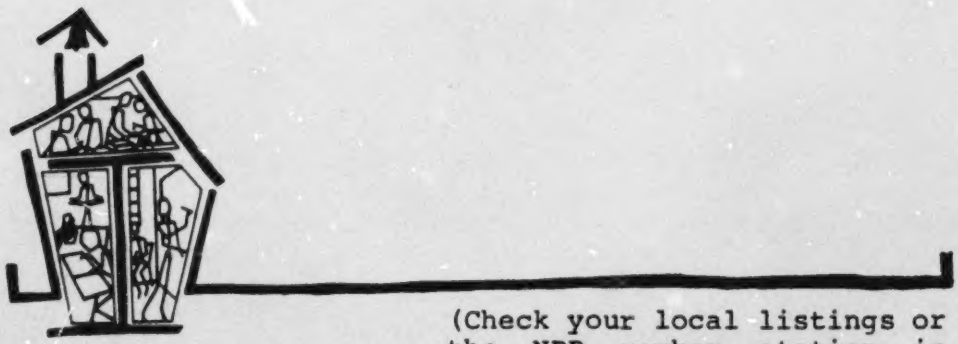

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PROGRAM #45

DAYCARE

(OPENING THEME)

MERROW: If you've ever been to school, stay tuned.

BLAIR: We've got something that will interest you. I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow, and this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

SHOPPING FOR CHILDCARE

WOMAN: Hello?

MERROW: Hi. Gee, I was just about to hang up.

WOMAN: Yes?

MERROW: My name's John Merrow. I saw your ad in the paper about the childcare.

WOMAN: Yes.

MERROW: We're about to have a baby, and I want to find out about the childcare.

WOMAN: That's $35 a week.

MERROW: $35 a week.

WOMAN: Uh-huh.

BLAIR: That's John on the phone looking for childcare in the Want Ads, and that's what this program is all about -- Who's Watching the Children?

MERROW: So, we drop the baby off?

WOMAN: Yes, that's right. You bring the baby to me and you have three forms to fill out.

MERROW: How many children are you taking care of?

WOMAN: Well, we don't give out the number of children. We don't feel that's necessary. We're qualified and I'm licensed. And everybody happy.

MERROW: The reason that I ask is that I can hear some.

WOMAN: Yeah, they're having a good time. Oh, yeah.

MERROW: They sound like they're having fun.

WOMAN: Oh, yeah, they are. We have a good nursery.

MERROW: Do you have any other adults helping you?

WOMAN: Yes, I have an aide. Uh-huh.

MERROW: Oh, I see. So, there's another adult there.

MERROW: Because I'd be worried that my baby would start crying and no one would be there to . . .

WOMAN: Oh, no, no, no. We wouldn't let it do that. Uh-huh.

MERROW: You know, I'm curious to know how you got into this.

WOMAN: Into daycare centers?

MERROW: Yeah.

WOMAN: Well, you've got to be kind of smart, and you've got to love children, and you go for orientation, and if you qualify, then they issue you your license.

MERROW: Oh. So, you've been through a training program.

WOMAN: Yes. I'm a nurse.

MERROW: Do they get to go outside?

WOMAN: No, no, no. Not the ones . . . the ones that are not walking, no.

MERROW: What's that noise I hear in the background? It sounds like a TV.

WOMAN: It is a TV. They have their TV, too.

MERROW: What are they watching?

WOMAN: Beg your pardon?

MERROW: What are they watching?

WOMAN: They watch anything - cartoons, everything.

BLAIR: Would you leave your child in that nursery? It's difficult to make decisions about daycare - yet, millions of children are cared for outside the family because parents are at work. Some people say there's a shortage of daycare, but that depends on how you define it. If you believe that the only daycare is a formal, licensed, supervised center or home, then there is a shortage. There are about one million spaces available, and over six million preschool children with working mothers. But there are many informal methods of childcare -- some of them good and some of them terrible. It's the choice that's so difficult.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: How good is the daycare that our children are getting? We'll let you decide. In the next hour, we'll visit several daycare centers, answer ads for daycare in the paper. We'll examine Federal legislation concerning children and talk to researchers about what daycare does for and to children.

DR. JANE GOLD

GOLD: Take your cues from your child. If your kid comes home and is really fussy a lot, isn't sleeping well, if the child really develops a lot of abnormal fears - for instance, if they weren't before, but now they're suddenly wetting their bed where they have been

toilet-trained before; if they really become very fearful of dark places or something -- the other is to look over your child's body; make sure that there are no physical marks; that the child hasn't been abused in some way.

Going through the danger signals, it seems to indicate or paint the picture that daycare is just horrendous. And that's not the impression, but there is bad daycare out there, and you've got to be alert to it. You've got to take the initiative to find out.

MERROW: That's Dr. Jane Gold, author of a booklet called Checking Out Childcare. Gold tells Wendy about the size of the childcare business in this country.

GOLD: Daycare is a loosely organized business, but it's a big business. We're talking about a business that brings in over $6 billion a year. Up to about one billion and a half to two billion is federally sponsored and the rest comes from the private sector. People are paying out that money themselves. The majority of daycare is performed and operated on a very informal basis. It's Mrs. Brown down the street taking care of a couple of kids--it's a situation where your sister takes care of your kid while you work or your older brother comes in and takes care of your child. It's lots of mixes and arrangements. Finding good arrangements is probably always difficult.

BLAIR: How about licensing? Does licensing mean something or not?

GOLD: That's a ball of wax. It all depends. There's two levels of licensing right now. There's your state licensing and there's your federal licensing. The majority of daycare, again, is informally organized and unlicensed.

There's been a national consumer usage study done by the Office of Child Development and some of the more general figures indicate that in 1974, 34.4% of all married women with children under age six have jobs. This is compared to 18.6% in 1960--that's a major increase. Approximately three million women with children 13 and under headed their own households. So, you've got a lot of single parents out there.

Of these women who head their own household, 54% of those with pre-school children are employed. Also, look at the kind of average earning these women make. Their salaries are not that high. For the working women--for the single parent family--I think the average income is $7,000 to $8,000. So, it's significantly under what the two-parent family, or the male-headed household brings into the home in terms of money.

MERROW: Dr. Jane Gold, author of a booklet called Checking Out Child Care. Despite the need for child care because of the number of working mothers, controversy still rages over whether or not it is right for a mother to leave her child with someone else.

Peggy Pizzo, author of Infant Child Care Debate: Not Whether But How, thinks the controversy creates guilt in parents.

PEGGY PIZZO

PIZZO: We've often heard, for example, that parents make their quick choices about daycare--they take the first place that they see. The amount of controversy over whether or not a parent should

use daycare creates so much emotional turmoil in parents who are leaving children that it becomes necessary to "get it over with" quickly.

MERROW: Peggy Pizzo believes that daycare, especially for infants, must provide security and continuity for the child. But arrangements for child care, especially in the home, are fragile and often break-up.

Pizzo tells Wendy that the relationship between the mother and the child care person is critical.

PIZZO: I don't see that relationship as an employer/employee relationship or a master/servant relationship at all. I see it as much more of a cooperative kind of relationship in which parents are kept well-informed about what's going on and parents have a good deal to say about designing the sort of environment in which the children will be nurtured. I don't think you can come in with a total blueprint. But I have had the experience of developing a more cooperative type of arrangement in which there was a mutual respect between a parent and a care-giver.

I think that's an idea--I think there are definite obstacles.

MERROW: Peggy Pizzo, author of the Infant Child Care Debate: Not Whether But How.

BLAIR: The obstacles that Pizzo mentioned have to do with trust, John. She told me that mothers pretend to trust the person with whom they leave the child, right from the beginning, and may not ask all the questions they should. In fact, it's perfectly normal and healthy not to trust right away. Trust only comes from experience. She says it's better to ask a lot of questions and nail down all the particulars in the beginning--like, what to do in an emergency, and so forth. This will help avoid misunderstandings later. It's also important to remember that arrangements will break up, usually due to some outside influence. It's all part of the fragile business.

MERROW: That idea of establishing trust is easier said than done. It seems to me that most daycare is a bit of a gamble--not an ideal situation.

REPORTER: Mrs. Wilson, what can the working parent expect from the pre-school?

WILSON: Good supervision. I know that when a person is working, they should not have to worry whether their child is being cared for properly.

REPORTER: As a child may spend the better part of the day in school, who is most responsible for teaching him right from wrong?

WILSON: The school is to supplement what the parent cannot do. The parent would be there if he could. But because he's working, he has allowed the school to take charge

MERROW: Daycare teacher, Glenda Wilson talking with Reporter Lloyd Johnson of Station KCRW in Santa Monica, California.

BLAIR: John spent the last few days visiting daycare facilities here in Washington. One of them is the Allison Day Care Center. There, he saw three adults caring for twenty-six children in a large yellow room with two windows at one end. The Center is run by a Baptist church and charges twenty-five dollar per week, per child. Children get to go outside only every fourth day; but they do get three hot meals and a snack every day.

John talked with Doris Cowherd and Charles Olney, who teach at the Allison Center.

MERROW: What's a typical day--I know it's a twelve-hour day, Ms. Cowherd--are you here for the twelve hours?

DORIS COWHERD

COWHERD: Yes, I am. I'm here from six until six-thirty in the evening.

MERROW: You're starting school soon but that's required, isn't it? You have to have a certain number of hours?

COWHERD: A certain amount of hours--so many hours the only I could get in would be like from seven to ten.

MERROW: So, you'll be working a twelve-hour day and then going to school for three hours a night?

COWHERD: Yes, I have to in order to be qualified, and I don't mind.

MERROW: You look like you enjoy it.

COWHERD: I do. I like it very much.

MERROW: What do you do when you get angry? I mean, you must have times when one little kid is acting up and you get angry?

COWHERD: Sometimes they may give you a little tension, but I will come and get my coffee--'cause I like coffee--and I take a sip of coffee--and then I'll take a deep breath and go back and try to work with him again. If I get upset and frighten the child, I wouldn't be able to do anything with him.

MERROW: Do you ever just tell the kid that he or she is making you mad?

COWHERD: No, I don't tell them that. I never let them know when I am angry or when they've made me angry because I think that would make my children shy of me. I wouldn't want them to do that because now they all seem to care. I greet them in the morning with a smile and they give me a smile.

(CHILDREN PLAYING A CIRCULAR, CHANTING GAME)

MERROW: How much training have you had beyond high school?

CHARLES OLNEY

OLNEY: Well, I've had VISTA training and worked in different schools in the city and out of the city and I'm getting ready to

go back to school to get the required nine hours that you have to have and some more hours beyond that nine to become an actual, licensed, early childhood development teacher.

MERROW: At this time, you're paid $2.50 an hour--is that because you haven't had the college training? Will your salary go up after you've had the college?

OLNEY: Well, the salary is based on the budget--that's the minimum wage for us.

MERROW: If you had finished college, would you be making the same amount?

OLNEY: Well, if I had finished college, I think I would go on into public schools.

MERROW: Is that an aspiration you have?

OLNEY: Ah...some day...not right now.

(CHILDREN PLAYING A SOUND GAME ABOUT A BUS)

BLAIR: Charles Olney and Doris Cowherd, teachers at the Allison Day Care Center in Washington.

MERROW: I can certainly understand why Mr. Olney wants to teach in public school some day. At $2.50 an hour, even a twelve-hour day doesn't add up to much money. In fact, low salaries and high turn-over are common to daycare centers around the country.

BLAIR: The Columbia Road Center is next on John's list. Here, the top teacher salary is $8,500. This center stresses education and Director Lani Anderson is proud of the fact that there's no television set.

LANI ANDERSON

ANDERSON: There are so many things to learn in this world and I think the sooner you start learning, the better. I think a child who comes to daycare, if it's a good daycare, is so much better equipped to handle the world when he gets older.

BLAIR: Lani anderson told John about a typical day at the Columbia Road Center.

ANDERSON: The Center opens at seven-thirty and from seven-thirty until about nine, they have free-play in the gym area. Or, maybe one teacher will set up some particular project in a classroom. They'll have all the jungle-gym, all the large muscle equipment, the creative arts area open and maybe one other area in a classroom will be open for the children.

Nine o'clock, they get ready for breakfast. They have a Department of Agriculture set breakfast. The children are required to be here by nine-thirty so they don't miss out on the educational part of the program. That's when that starts.

Nowadays education people have such strong feelings about education that it's as bad as sex and religion--you can't discuss it at parties. People get very vehement about it. There are people who believe in Piaget and Freud and this one and that one.

MERROW: What do you folks believe in?

ANDERSON: Well, a little bit of everything--mostly common sense. Most of our staff has a great deal of common sense. It's very fine to read books on all these wonderful methods. When you get

in a classroom full of children, each one coming from a multi-cultural background--multi-racial background--multi-economic background, you can't just use one method or another method. A child who's used to being clobbered in the home is not going to react to your very sweet, smiling voice saying, " Would you please pick up such and such?" I mean, he just isn't going to move.

MERROW: So, you have to clobber him?

ANDERSON: No, (chuckles) we don't clobber children. We will physically move a child or something like that. I'm sure most of the other centers do it, too, but I don't think they would even admit it. (Laughter) I don't know, maybe they would.

Our Center also stresses skills. I think that's a "gone by the wayside" thing nowadays. All I ever hear when I go to workshops and different classes is "Don't push the children! Don't push the children!" I think there's a lot to be said for socialization, too, in letting a child learn through play. But I also think people don't do enough with skills.

MERROW: The typical day--when does it end?

ANDERSON: Most kids leave around five-thirty. It's more like an eight-thirty to five-thirty day--which is a long, tedious day. They get a hot lunch about twelve and then they go down for a nap for a couple of hours. They get up around three. From three to six, there are some new staff members who come on with a fresh kind of attitude towards the kids. I find that if you work an eight-hour day in a daycare center, by the time you got through nap and try to get a fresh--the kids are fairly fresh because they've had a nap. Some of the staff that are staying for the eight-hour day will take a nap with them. Your old grudges come back to roost. I mean if Silas has been clobbering kids all morning and he wakes up and goes to hit somebody--instead of having a fresh attitude like this is the first time it happened, you remember all those past events. Someone coming in fresh will not even know about what Silas did and they can say, "Now, Silas, don't do that." They can have that patience in reserve. He'll have a whole three hours yet to build up his faults again until tomorrow.

MERROW: Lani Anderson, Director of the Columbia Road Day Care Center, here in Washington. In this Center, children are tested for hearing and eyesight development, the level of lead in their blood, and learning disabilities.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

MERROW: Another variety of day care is a program sponsored by the public schools. Philadelphia has one called "Get Set". In that city, five thousand children attend ninety-two centers, year 'round. Liane Hansen of Station WUHY, reports.

LIANE HANSEN

HANSEN: Child care and early childhood education through the public schools has been alive and well for eleven years in Philadelphia's "Get Set" program. Need is the main priority for admission into the program, which ha no fees, and all children are provided with a hot lunch. Bert am Sneed, director of the program, believes there are advantages and disadvantages to the program's involvement with the public school system.

BERTRAM SNEED

SNEED: One of the things that concerns many of the public day care centers is something we call "cash flow". Where are the monies? How soon can you get your hands on them to keep your operation going? It means that you have to go to banks and you have to borrow money and it creates problems. I'm not saying that the school system doesn't borrow money, but in terms of our own program, if the state doesn't pay off it takes two months, three months, six months to get the money. The process says that first you spend the money, then you bill the state and then they return it to you. What that means to a small operation is that it may become defunct simply because the funds aren't there. So that's a definite disadvantage.

One advantage I find is that if you start with kids much sooner, rather than wait until they are four and a half or five years old and get into kindergarten--if you start at three, it might make a difference. So, we could tie together what happens with him as a three and four year old right on through the grades.

Another benefit is that I think that by being in schools the edifices are sturdier, substantial, they're clean, they're neat. It's much better than being in a small church where that kind of thing isn't true, or in a community center where that kind of thing may not be true; or any number of other places where they may be where that's not true.

On the other side of the coin, all of our employees are unionized. Now, to a degree, I think that's good. I think people are entitled to the best possible benefits they can get on the job. But, quite frankly, it has made this operation much more expensive than any other operation of a similar kind. We have in our program certified teachers and I applaud that. But daycare does not require certified teachers. The child's mind is important. If you think about a school situation, you seem to over-emphasize the educational, and forget about the other.

BLAIR: Parent involvement is an essential feature of "Get Set". Mrs. Elsie Caldwell is head of the Parent Center Council at the First African "Get Set" at 42nd and Gerard Avenue in Philadelphia. She says that the "Get Set" program is a positive influence on her life and the lives of her children.

ELSIE CALDWELL

CALDWELL: You don't mind going out there to those meetings and things. You'll be tired but you'll find something within you to make you say, "I gotta get up 'cause I wanna see what's happenin' with my child." At "Get Set", your child goes on trips, he'll take little field ventures and things like that, which is walking in the neighborhood and learning about the neighborhood and learning about the people in the neighborhood they play a very important part in your lives.

(CHILDREN SHOUTING OUT SEQUENTIAL NUMBERS)

HANSEN: This is Liane Hansen in Philadelphia.

MERROW: Despite support for day care centers and child care in the public schools, the fastest-growing form of child care, and by far the most widely used is still home care. That's Mrs. Brown down the street who keeps four or five children or who comes into your home and cares for your child. This is the kind

of care most parents actually prefer according to Harvard Professor Jerome Kagan, who studied the effects of day care.

BLAIR: Kagan looked at thirty-two children of working-class families in Boston for a two-year period. The children were tested for educational and social development and the quality of their relationships with their mothers. Those test results were compared with tests of another group of children who were kept at home for this same period. Professor Kagan told John by telephone about the study.

PROFESSOR JEROME KAGAN

KAGAN: If day care is optimal, then sending your young child to a day care center doesn't seem to have much of an effect on him.

MERROW: It's kind of a negative statement, isn't it? Good day care doesn't hurt?

KAGAN: It depends on whether you are prejudiced for or against day care. If you're for day care, then you're going to say that the results showed day care can't hurt you. If you're against day care, well, you're going to say day care can't help you.

It also happens that there are a half a dozen other studies now done, both in Canada and the United States, that find the same result. They all come to the same conclusion that if care is good, there is no difference. However, I must add, if care is bad, then there's a whale of a difference.

A young woman named Mary Peasley, in Florida, did a study of some very bad day care centers where the ratios were one care-taker to fifteen infants. She found serious retardation in the infants who were in day care. So, the variable of power is not day care; it's quality of care.

MERROW: When you talked about quality of care the first thing you talked about was staff ratios. Do you think that's the most important determinant?

KAGAN: Yes, I do. Yes. The best way to guarantee good day care is to write regulations that (a) guarantee the participation of the parents in decisions about the care. Parents are very good at noting if their children's development is awry. They will know it. (b)I would have voted for, rather than having regulations on what you do at a day care center, which you cannot legislate -- that you have a government inspecting team as you do for Swift and Company, that are patroling the country for federally supported day care centers, if there are some, and occasionally dropping in. You can tell in a day whether the children in this day care center are in any way developing anomalously. It is very easy to do if the people are trained. Then have regulations about ratio. See, that's an easy thing to do. I would say that if the children are under eighteen months, the ratio should not be larger than three to one. And, if the children are between eighteen months and three years, the ratio should not be greater than six to one. That regulation I would be for. That is a discreet number--no evaluation and easy to write in a sentence.

MERROW: Professor Kagan, venture an opinion, if you would. How far away are we from having a good system of day care in this country?

KAGAN: We're a long way because recent research indicates that American mothers, either from economically advantaged or less advantaged neighborhoods, don't want day care. That is, if they have a choice--if they have to work--the first thing a mother wants is to bring someone in her home--a relative or a friend--payment or non-payment. If she can't have that, then she wants to bring her child to a friend's home or a woman she pays. And her last preference is for day care. The reasons are very profound. They have deep historical biases--but that's how American mothers feel. In the last five years, there's been a large increase in what is called family day care--that's category two--where you bring you children to another woman.

MERROW: Umm-mm.

KAGAN: And a very trivial increase in day care centers. That reflects the mood of the American families. For that reason, I don't think we are going to see a dramatic increase in the building of bricks and mortar day care centers. Because, (a) they are very expensive and (b) American families don't want them. It's very hard to monitor quality of the care and the larger the setting, the more bureaucratic it becomes and the more bureaucratic it becomes the less responsibility each individual care-taker tends to feel for the child. I don't think mothers say this to themselves in any analytical fashion. It is their intuition.

MERROW: Professor Jerome Kagan, a psychologist at Harvard University.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

WOMAN: Well, they've just sort of been family. They haven't been singled out in any way. It's just that they--well, I just tried to treat 'em like my own children...and see that they had a home and I think they feel like they have had a home.

BLAIR: Family day care is rapidly growing, and it can be good. But, there is a wide range of quality in that kind of care. Training individuals to care for children at home is becoming more and more important. Some day care centers, like the Rosemont Day Care Center, in Washington, have training programs to prepare people to care for children in their own homes.

Linda Ohmans, who trains the women, thinks that kind of care comes closest to simulating the home environment.

LINDA OHMANS

OHMANS: That, to me, is the main advantage of the family home. You avoid a lot of the "institutionalness" of a center--even like Rosemont. Another real advantage is that children can be in mixed age groups. All the three year olds aren't together and the children are able to learn from each other that way. A lot of the parents prefer the family home because the family home mother's philosophy might be closer to their philosophy of how the child should be raised.

MERROW: What kinds of qualifications do you look for?

OHMANS: I think the things that's most important to me is that a good family home mother should be somebody who sees that there are learning opportunities in everything that you do with children. Children can learn as much, or even more so, at home as they can in a formal school environment. It's really important for family home mothers to take good physical care of the children. I mean, to know what a good nutritious meal is and to be sure that the children get regular naps and that they play outside and that they have a good balance between active and quiet activities. Another real important thing for a family home mother is that she be somebody who is really understanding of the parents' problems. A lot of the parents whose children go to family homes are very young mothers who are having their first experiences with raising kids and they look to a lot of the family home mothers as sort of surrogate mothers of their own and will ask for advice. We need really understanding, compassionate women.

BLAIR: Linda Ohmans, family home care teacher-trainer at the Rosemont Day Care Center in Washington.

(TELEPHONE IS RINGING)

MERROW: Do you take care of infants?

VOICE: Yes, we do.

MERROW: We're gonna have a baby. How many kids do you take care of?

VOICE: Well, at the moment we just have two. We are trying to get more.

MERROW: You say "we"...?

VOICE: Yes, me and my mother.

MERROW: Oh, I see. How much will it cost?

VOICE: Well, we're charging twenty dollars a week.

MERROW: Do you have a license?

VOICE: Yes, we do.

MERROW: I am curious. How come you do this? Is this a good source of income?

VOICE: No, this is something we like to do. We love children.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

BLAIR: Louise Sullivan directs the Rosemont DayCare Center. There, a hundred and ten children, from two-months, to five years, are cared for. Yet, Rosemont can't provide care for all those in need and social costs are great.

LOUISE SULLIVAN

SULLIVAN: We have a long waiting-list. I think we always close it when it gets beyond two or three hundred. That's just people from our neighborhood. We have many calls that we refer to other

neighborhoods. There are very few resources, particularly for infant day care, and there are many women who have no choices--no options. They must work and they need a place for their children where they can feel free from worry and guilt about the child's needs not being met.

MERROW: You say you have a waiting-list of two or three hundred. What would I find if I went to those two or three hundred mothers? What do you suppose they are doing with their children?

SULLIVAN: Well, some of them are on public welfare. Some of them are...

MERROW: Are you implying they are on public welfare because they couldn't get day care?

SULLIVAN: Yes...many women are. We have several mothers who when they placed their children here were receiving public assistance and who now have good jobs and have moved up the economic ladder. I think there are many women out there who would like to do that if they could feel that their children's needs were being met.

MERROW: What about the other mothers on that waiting list?

SULLIVAN: We try not to think about them because some of the stories sound so bad. Children in informal baby-sitting arrangments where there are fourteen or fifteen children with one uneducated--at least uneducated in early childhood--person trying to manage to keep them from getting into accidents and staying alive. It's pretty depressing. So, if we don't have a place for them, we try not to think about it.

MERROW: But sometimes you hear directly from those women?

SULLIVAN: Yes, they call back. We have a social worker who does the intake. They call all the time plaintively looking for a place.

MERROW: Mrs. Louise Sullivan, Executive Director of the Rosemont Day Care Center in the District of Columbia.

(TELEPHONE RINGS)

VOICE: Hello?

MERROW: Hello, My name's John Merrow. I saw your ad in the newspaper about the day care?

VOICE: Yes?

MERROW: We're about to have a baby. Do you take care of infants?

VOICE: Yes.

MERROW: Can you tell me something about your place? How much does it cost?

VOICE: Well, between twenty and twenty-five.

MERROW. Oh, I see. Do you have a license to do it?

VOICE: Yeah...uhhunh.

MERROW: Who's the license from?

VOICE: I think you're asking a little too many questions, don't you?

MERROW: Well, let me--you know why I'm asking so many questions? You're right, I am. Part of my job involves doing a radio program and we're doing a radio program about child care.

VOICE: I see.

MERROW: How many kids do you hope to get?

VOICE: Well, maybe about one or two or something like that.

MERROW: Oh, just a couple of kids?

VOICE: Yeah, well, I mean a got some kids of my own. I mean I don't want anybody to drive me crazy but....

MERROW: (LAUGHS)

VOICE: If there're are too many children...I wanna also keep my nerves together too, you know.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

MERROW: The telephone calls and visits we made to centers point up the need for standards in day care. Some groups are encouraging the federal government to play a bigger role.

NPR Reporter, David Ensor, joins Options in Education this week with an in-depth look at the federal role in day care.

HOFFMAN: If we get Mr. Carter and Mondale in the White House, both of whom are clearly advocates of child care, then I think the prospects for legislation of some kind are going to be very good.

DAVID ENSOR

ENSOR: That's Staff Director, Ellen Hoffman of Senator Walter Mondale's Subcommittee on Children and Youth. She spoke to the American Federation of Teachers' Convention recently in Miami.

Back in 1971, the Congress passed just the kind of comprehensive kind of child-care bill that she's talking about...a high point for those who think the federal government should set up day care, nationwide. President Nixon vetoed the bill, though, saying that it threatened the stability of the American family. But Mondale and fellow liberal, John Brademas, started hearings on a new bill. This one, with $1.8 billion in it, to fund everything from day care centers to parent education. They gave up on getting anywhere with that bill late last year when, on top of our country's severe budget problems, a smear campaign stimulated thousands of letters a day to congressmen denouncing the Mondale/Brademas "Sovietizing" bill.

So, before we consider the prospects for a bigger federal role in programs for pre-school children, let's take a look at that smear campaign.

VOICE: This is Alan Stang...stick around.

ENSOR: The Alan Stang Report is a regular series of radio editorials. Late in 1975, Stang did several reports on the Brademas/Mondale Bill.

ALAN STANG REPORT

Regular listeners to these broadcasts have, time after time, heard your reporter discuss the fact that our millionaire, totalitarian, socialist rulers are trying to take your children away. This, of course, is standard operating procedure in a dictatorship. Every dictator takes the children from the parents in order to enslave the country. Still another scheme is now moving quietly through the Congress. It is the Child and Family Services Act of 1975, introduced by Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota, and Congressman John Brademas of Indiana. This bill, if passed and signed into law, would not only spend additional billions of your hard-earned dollars, it would also go a long way toward the conspiratorial goal of giving the federal government complete control of your children. The unspoken and insulting assumption behind the Mondale/Brademas Child and Family Services Act of 1975, is that the American people in general are failures as parents and that the federal government, therefore, has to raise your children. And, it is backed by the same so-called liberals who claim that the federal government has too much power.

The incredible situation in Sweden is exactly what the child developers in our country are trying to inflict on us. And, you are going to get it...if you permit the Mondale/Brademas Hitler Youth Act to become law.

Why not get in touch with your Congressmen and Senators and let them know where you stand. When the government controls the children...it controls the people.

This is Alan Stang...think about it.

The Alan Stang Report is produced by The John Birch Society Features.

ENSOR: Clips from two editorials. The Birch Society say they do not know how many stations used that report and most people see the Birch Society as pretty extreme. But more serious damage was done to the bill by something else. An anonymous flyer. This leaflet was sent to the media and thousands of parents, particularly throughout the Midwest and Texas. Congressman John Brademas says the leaflet contained a lot of inaccurate statements about the proposed Child and Family Services Act.

CONGRESSMAN JOHN BRADEMAS

BRADEMAS: The flyer charged that if the bill were passed, it would take the responsibility of parents to raise their children away from them and give it to the government. In point of fact, we had written into the bill, a whole series of protections for the role of the parent and had made quite clear that we wanted no interference with parental rights and responsibilities. The flyer also attacked the bill by quoting what it called a "charter of children's rights" issued by some National Council of Civil Liberties. They said that this charter would become a part of our bill. Well, that also was wholly false.

Last year, I was home in my home community of South Bend, and I turned on the television news and heard the local station news director of the biggest station in my district--a very respectable station--attacking the bill in an editorial. It charged that Little Herbie doesn't want to take the trash out--Little Susie doesn't want to go to Sunday School--Little Willie wants to get the other kids on the block to form a trade union against parents. All these things are possible under a bill, he charged, that Brademas and Mondale are sponsoring.

I called upon the news director and he confessed, and he was quite ashamed of himself, as he should have been, that he'd not even read the bill. What had happened, clearly, was that he'd gotten hold of one of these flyers and believed all of it and went on television with it. Well, I think I have found a number of otherwise respectable journalists--both newspaper people and television people--who simply did not do any checking of the facts. They didn't even bother to read the bill and then they go on with this kind of outrageous charge.

MERROW: The leaflets and editorials may have damaged the bill's chances, David, but more federal money in day care really does scare a lot of people anyway. How many letters did the bill's sponsors get?

ENSOR: Well, letters were sent to every single congressman and senator, though Mondale probably got the most. At the peak, his office got up to six thousand letters a day. Many of the writers weren't very complimentary about the sponsors of the bill. But Brademas says there's a good side to the enormous reaction.

BRADEMAS: It's clearly an issue that has touched a responsive chord in the minds of a lot of people. And, I suppose, in some ways, that's healthy because it's an indication of how strongly people feel about children.

ENSOR: What did the letters say?

BRADEMAS: They are simply saying, you know, don't communize our families. Please. This is what that "horrible bill" would do.

ENSOR: Congressman, there are a number of intelligent and well-informed conservatives. I remember one, Senator Buckley, testified against the bill, who does regard it as something which would lead to the break-up of a lot of American families. How do you counter that argument?

BRADEMAS: We want to be careful to avoid being sentimental about this matter. I wish that some of the people who talk so much about how they care about children and families would be willing to support efforts to help them.

ENSOR: Does this mean that you're gonna have trouble getting anything of a comprehensive nature for child day care through?

BRADEMAS: I think that a missing ingredient here has been presidential leadership. I think the fact that Senator Mondale is the Democratic vice-presidential nominee will be very significant in the event that Governor Carter and he are elected. Governor Carter has already spoken out on the importance of the family. If they become president and vice-president in 1977, you will have two persons who are committed to concern about the family and about children. That's the first point I'd make. The second point I'd

make is that, even as Governor Carter has made clear, that he will go slow on initiating new social programs at the outset of his administration, so too, I'm not asking for the moon. I'd be willing to move ahead on a program of this kind in a measured way. For one thing, we need to encourage the education of personnel to deal with the problems of young children.

ENSOR: John, I think it's important to underline the point that it's not just right-wingers who feel that a federal child care program is a bad idea.

MERROW: You mean the smear campaign didn't defeat the bill?

ENSOR: Not by itself. For one thing, social services to families have been provided by states and local governments for years. It's been entirely up to them to decide what services to provide and how. Brademas and Mondale want to pass a lot of federal dollars to something called "prime sponsors" who would become the decision makers in their area. The fight is over who controls all that federal money. Under the bill as it now stands, the State of Utah could decide what kind of child care gets funded in Salt Lake City or, it could be the Utah Board of Education or, it could be the Salt Lake City government that decides. The prime sponsor would be appointed by the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

MERROW: I'm confused, David. What exactly would the prime sponsor do?

ENSOR: The prime sponsor decides what kind of child care centers there are going to be in an area and who is going to run them.

MERROW: Does that mean we're going to have governors and boards of education fighting it out in every state for federal dollars?

ENSOR: No, I don't think so. The bill presumes that in most places, the state or local social service agencies are best qualified to make this decision. But, there will be some fights at the local level between different groups who want the chance to run the centers. Everyone from Head Start to community action groups, churches and public schools will get in on that one.

MERROW: What about the schools? Maybe public schools should just start at age three.

ENSOR: Well, there's a lot of support for that idea and it's not just from Albert Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers who's worried about unemployment, of course, among his members. Bill Pierce, for example. Pierce is the Washington director of the Child Welfare League of America. He told me that the public schools should sponsor child care nationwide.

BILL PIERCE

PIERCE: First of all, if they are the presumed prime sponsors, it provides one the best opportunities to have good standards. The second argument is that it's the best way to achieve adequate levels of staffing. The third argument is that it tends to eliminate those kinds of auspices, and I mean specifically "for profit" auspices, which the record proves, have done an inadequate job of caring for children. Fourth, it means that the programs become part of the

general educational picture and stand a much better chance of receiving adequate funding, both at the federal and the state level. And, I think fifth, and probably most importantly, it is the best way to assure that you have universally available services of high quality for all children whose parents decide that they would like their children to have them.

But, on the other side of the argument, are people like the Children's Defense Fund and all those people who work in Head Start Centers, or many of them anyway. They say, "Why does it have to be in public schools? Why not in some areas where we've got good Head Start programs, or good whatever it is--why don't they organize?"

I have the feeling that any kind of legislation that does finally pass is probably going to have to have some kind of presumed prime sponsor. I think right now there are really two choices. One is to either make the presumed prime sponsor the states and local units of government. The other major alternative is to have the local education agencies be the presumed prime sponsor. The group that should do it is the group that has the best means of actually offering the full range of services--namely, public schools.

ENSOR: Bill Pierce, Washington Director of the Child Welfare League of America. His group and teacher unions are in the minority on this one. Most child care interest groups doubt that the schools should take on the whole job. Judy Riggs, for example, was a lobbyist for the Children's Defense Fund.

JUDY RIGGS

RIGGS: Two of the big arguments that are used for making schools the prime sponsors are: (1) that schools exist in every neighborhood and are, therefore, available to be used. And, a lot of them have empty space; and, (2) that there are many trained educators who don't have jobs and there will be a continued over-supply of teachers.

In response to the first, of course, the fact that the school facility is there and is available to be used can be taken advantage of just as much in a more flexible prime sponsorship than the one where the schools control everything. There's nothing that would prevent the prime sponsor that Brademas is talking about from (1) contracting with the school to do the job directly or making arrangements with the schools to use the facilities that are available...

ENSOR:...and have the program in that school run by Head Start, or by community services.

RIGGS: Well, that, in fact, happens in many places where a program is actually run by somebody other than the school board and uses school facilities. The other problem, of course, is that early childhood programs are very different than traditional public school--or elementary or secondary education. Training to teach first grade, or third grade, or ninth grade, is not necessarily the same as training to work with early childhood programs. It is a different kind of skill. It's a different kind of job.

ENSOR: So, in other words, you would disagree with something that Albert Shanker often says which is, "All right, it's nice

that there's a lot of Head Start employees that do a great job with kids, but who never had any training. But, it's better just to eliminate them--we ought to require the training of everybody."

RIGGS: Oh, I think training is absolutely essential. There's no question about that. But the training that someone gets to be an elementary or secondary school teacher is not the training that's necessary to work with young children.

ENSOR: Also, they'd have to be re-trained.

RIGGS: That's right. In fact, you can contend that someone who has not had four or six years of elementary or secondary education training can be trained just as well to do early childhood things as a lot of those people. I mean, if I were president of a school board in a community that was struggling with unbalanced budgets and problemsin staffing--excess staff--and somebody said to me, "All right, you've got two hundred thousand dollars to spend in early childhood programs." I doubt very much if I would think very far beyond establishing some day care centers or some extended day kind of things in the schools. I mean, I'm not sure that that's the kind of forum to have the debate about whether we really want to have day care centers in our community or whether we want to strengthen the family day care homes.

I think you skew everything in a pre-determined way when you talk about giving it to the schools.

ENSOR: Former child care lobbyist,, Judy Riggs. Despite Riggs' concerns, Bill Pierce is adamant. He recites a litany of failures of other child care sponsors.

PIERCE: Public welfare has failed. Public welfare agencies have been unable to hold the line in terms of the welfare benefits they give. There's an attack on food stamps; there's an attack on the welfare recipients; and the quality and quantity of services that are given to poor women and children are going down hill constantly. In Texas, as an example, they used to have a ratio, for little tiny children, of one to six. They had a big study and they said that it was too many kids. They said, "Look, we need to make it maybe one to three or one to two." The Texas Department of Welfare made it one to nine because it spread the money further. There's another option, too, and that's the health field. The health field has failed, too. Doctors are unalterably opposed to anything that smacks of universal services. That sounds too much like universal health services, which sounds too much like socialized medicine. There's a third alternative, too, and that's what you call "child development" or other kinds of alternatives. Frankly, the only thing that all the other hodge-podge of alternatives agree on is that they want the job. They want the job for a lot of reasons. They want the job because they've got buildings to fill; or, they want the job because they want to have the jobs that they see in day care for their people, for some other reasons.

ENSOR: Child Welfare League official, William Pierce.

MERROW: Up to now, David, we've talked about the prospects of the federal government paying for a lot of new programs. But, there's plenty of federally funded day care already.

ENSOR: Of course you're right, John. Head Start, for example, got going in the late sixties as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. And, it's one of the few Great Society programs that almost everyone agrees is a success. And, Head Start spends about four hundred and thirty million a year on underprivileged kids. They learn the alphabet and a little math...

MERROW: So that they are ready to compete with a culturally advantaged middle class when they get to first grade. But, David, there's a much bigger source of federal money in child care--commonly called Title 20. It has $2.5 billion for states and cities to pay for everything from "meals on wheels" to day care. They are putting about $700 million of that into child care.

ENSOR: So, the logical question is...who gets the money?

MERROW: The federal government pays for day care for children of needy families. They can go to any center run by the city, the church, the lady down the street or a private "for-profit" center.

ENSOR: That's right. There are fire and safety regulations to meet and there's something else that's causing trouble. Starting in October, 1977, centers will be required to have a certain number of adults for every child--if they want federal money.

MERROW. Centers must have one adult for every baby under six weeks old. Then there can be five three year olds to one adult; or, six or seven four to five year olds per adult. That's pretty strict. A lot stricter than most centers are able to meet right now. About eight percent of the cost of running a center is for staff. So, more staff means more money. Under a law President Ford just signed, there will be an HEW study on whether kids really need that much supervision. That study is supposed to be out before October of '77, so that Congress can decide whether to keep the strict staffing ratios.

Child advocate, Judy Riggs, is sure they should.

RIGGS: We're talking about a major public investment in a human service delivery area. I would think that our experiences with nursing homes, in the medicaid mills and everything, suggest what happens when you put a lot of money out for human services and don't have some standards. It's very difficult to control the quality of care that's being given. The problem with relying on state or local governments to set the standards in this area is that you've got, essentially, if you leave it up to the states, which is what the argument of the President is, you have the same agency that has the responsibility for controlling welfare rolls. Of course the way to control welfare rolls is to get mothers of young children to work. Now if the agency that is responsible for keeping down the welfare rolls and the entity that's responsible for making limited money go as far as possible is also making decisions about what the level of care should be, you have an almost impossible conflict.

ENSOR: You didn't want to talk about numbers, but I want you to anyway. The federal inter-agency day care requirements, which Title 20 will extend down to even the very youngest children, are viewed by most as pretty strict standards. Do you think they should be nationwide?

RIGGS: Yes, yes, I do. I definitely do. You talk about ratios of five to one, or seven to one, or three to one. I think what you've got to remember is you're talking about dealing with very young children who need a lot of attention. You're talking about children who come to a day care center at seven-thirty in the morning--sometimes in their pajamas--while their mothers go off to work. And, they're there until five-thirty or six-thirty at night. This is their whole day--this is their whole learning experience--it's their whole--most of their developmental experience. To think that you or I or any other one person can deal from seven-thirty in the morning until six o'clock at night with ten or twelve children in any kind of creative environment is just impossible.

ENSOR: Riggs added that, in her view, if we can't afford plenty of staff for day care centers, we shouldn't have day care centers.

MERROW: I talked to someone who totally disagrees with Judy Riggs on that one, David. Wayne Smith, who is Director of the National Assocation for Child Development and Education. That's a group of 2,500, private, for-profit, day care center operators who often have disadvantaged children in their centers with fees covered by federal money. Smith says it's a case of too much meddling by Washington.

WAYNE SMITH

SMITH: The staffing ratios were put together by a group of people at HEW without any research and without any input from the proprietary operators in the United States. When you sit down with a group of bureaucrats and come up with a six to one ratio or a five to one ratio or a four to one ratio--which would have been advocated in these standards --that's not the way to sit down and give good quality care to children in America today. We are totally against any federal intervention in family life or in care or children, per se. Every state in the United States has rules and regulations. Some states might have different child/staff ratios as compared to others. But, we want to work within the states. The states are on the level of working with our centers. The federal government is like a treasury.

MERROW: What would have been the way to arrive at the proper ratios?

SMITH: I think if they had done research--which they are now doing.

MERROW: Do you object to the federal government setting ratios in the first place?

SMITH: Very much so.

MERROW: Now, wait a minute...you're willing to accept the federal money, though. About half of these 2,500 centers that you represent, in fact, do get federal money. Doesn't the federal government have an obligation to set standards for how that money is used?

SMITH: No, because the money goes to the state. If the federal government gave the money directly to the proprietary operators, we could see then the situation--that there would have to be some kind of standards. But, the money goes to the states.

MERROW: But, that's not the way the federal system works. If the federal government is saying they are setting this money aside for "X" and is passing it through the states, then, it seems to me, that the federal government cannot allow a state to set any kind of regulation it wants. You've got a wide range of staffing regulations. Louisiana and the District of Columbia, for example.

SMITH: I think that you will find that why you see a wide range is because the economic standards geographically are a big change. Louisiana with the weather conditions and the way the, ah, set-up of the school is is completely different than up in New England.

MERROW: I have to confess that I don't understand that, at all. Are you saying that the weather influences the ratio? How?

SMITH: In a sense that the Southwest--the children are outdoors more and they'renot inhibited by bein' indoors like they would be up in the New England or Midwest or even in some parts of the West. So, that, in your younger brackets from two to five, you can have more children, per ratio, to a teacher than you would if you were in a confined space in a, say, heavily-type winter weather. So, those are the conditions that you have to take into consideration.

A lot of people say, well, we want to give quality care. Remember that the state has to implement all of these rules and regulations. And, if they are found to be wrong, the state is going to have--not the federal government. And, I think that's where we should, you know, rely--on a local level. Not in Washington where a handful of bureaucrats can sit down and tell you, as a mother or father, that you should have four children to one adult or one teacher in a center.

MERROW: Private day care lobbyist — Wayne Smith.

ENSOR: John, I'd just like to give the last word on day care staffing to Bill Pierce.

PIERCE. Anyone that's ever been with children knows that child/staff ratios make all the difference in the world. You can have God and Maria Montessori both in the room and if you've got too many kids, they're gonna louse it up.

MERROW: David, how about some predictions? What's going to happen in the staffing ratio battle. Does it depend on that HEW study?

ENSOR: Well, they're trying to find out if it makes any difference if a center has more adults. But I think the way the study is interpreted will have a lot to do with politics.

MERROW: Meaning?

ENSOR: Well, meaning that unless the study comes down flat on one side or the other, it will be used by both sides to support their arguments. If President Ford is re-elected, staffing standards will probably be left up to the states; and, if Carter and Mondale get in, there will be stricter staffing ratios and more federal money for child care.

MERROW: Thanks for being with us. NPR Reporter, David Ensor, with an update on federal support for day care.

BLAIR: Material for this program on day care came from Tom Berger of Station WVPB in Beckley, West Virginia; Liane Hansen of Station WUHY in Philadelphia; and Lloyd Johnson of Station KCRW in Santa Monica, California.

MERROW: If you'd like a transcript of this program, send 25¢ to National Public Radio-Education, Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for program number 45. A cassette costs $4. And by the way, if you'd like to help us improve this program, ask for our questionnaire. Our address, again, is National Public Radio-Education, Washington, D.C. 20036.

GOLD: Day care is a loosely organized business, but it's a big business.

COWHERD: Sometime they may kind of give you a little tension. But, I will come and get my coffee...

ANDERSON: There are so many things in this world to learn--and I think the sooner you start learning the better.

GOLD: But there is bad day care out there.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

BLAIR: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of National Public Radio and the Institute for Educational Leadership. Principal support is provided by the National Institute of Education and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

MERROW: This program is produced by Jo Ellen Rackleff, production assistance by Joan Friedenberg. The executive producer is John Merrow.

(MUSIC UP AND OUT)

BLAIR: This is NPR, National Public Radio.